

The Poetic Meaning of Tears in the Opening and Closing Parts of the *Sarashina nikki*

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This paper is inspired by Prof. Tzvetana Kristeva's (2001b) monumental study on the poetic image of tears, *Namida no shigaku: Ōchō bungaku ni okeru shiteki gengo* (*The Poetics of Tears: Poetic Language in the Literature of the Heian Court*), and is based on my Ph.D. research done under her supervision. Throughout my Ph.D. studies, Prof. Kristeva guided me with passion and dedication. She helped me discover the beauty of Japanese classical literature, and the exciting possibility of numerous and novel readings of poetic texts.

The *Sarashina nikki* (The *Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1058)¹⁾ written by Takasue no Musume, Takasue's daughter (1008–1059),²⁾ is one of the literary works within the genre of *nikki bungaku* ("diary literature" or "literary diaries") created by middle-class aristocratic women in the Heian period (794–1185).³⁾

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- 1) This title, *Sarashina nikki*, was not given by the author, but by subsequent copyists and scholars for purposes of identification. *Sarashina* is a mountainous region in central Japan, not mentioned in the work. However, there is an indirect allusion to the place in one of the final poems in the diary.
 - 2) Takasue's daughter or *Sugawara no Takasue no Musume* (The daughter of Sugawara no Takasue). Like the other women diary authors, her name is not known, because women's names were not included in genealogical records during the mid-Heian period.
 - 3) *Nikki bungaku*, "diary literature," refers to the group of first-person autobiographical works written in vernacular Japanese in the mid-Heian period (900–1100). These works do not fit strictly into the category of a diary because they contain poems and rarely include dated entries. The unique literary quality of *nikki bungaku*, created by a mixture of personal reflection and poetry, gave rise to different terms for the genre in English: "lyrical diaries," "memoirs," "poetic diaries," "poetic memoirs."

It is a retrospective account written in old age, covering forty years of the heroine's life, the longest span of time compared to the other representatives of the genre of *nikki bungaku*. However, despite its large temporal scope, the work is very selective, to the point of being criticized by some commentators as having a narrative structure which is too simple and fragmentary.⁴⁾ It has very few details from daily life and very scarce information on major events typical of the social and personal experience of the time, such as courtship, marriage, birth and upbringing of children or deaths in the family, which are important topics in the other Heian female diaries.⁵⁾

The unique narrative structure of the *Sarashina nikki* makes the meaning of some passages sound elusive. However, a deeper look at the text suggests that the *Sarashina nikki* is a product of careful selection of material with an artistic design in mind, producing "a complex, multidimensional network of signification" (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 8).

Especially notable are the recurrent motifs in the diary. Similar to the use of images in modern symbolist poetry, their meaning shifts and evades definition creating the possibility for diverse interpretations (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 81).

I will discuss one of those recurrent images, the image of tears, and its function in the beginning and ending of the diary. I will argue that the poetic image of tears in the opening part is an essential element in a meta-layer

4) The *Sarashina nikki*'s original has been lost and the text has a complicated history. Fujiwara Teika, a prominent poet-scholar, copied the manuscript from another copy. Teika noted that there were many dubious places he had marked in red. In the seventeenth century, the threads binding his manuscript were damaged and the copy came unbound. It was rebound by an anonymous scholar, but the new arrangement was incoherent and confusing. In 1924, Professor Tamai Kosuke, Heian literature scholar, identified seven major errors in the arrangement of the work and reconstructed it in the way that Fujiwara Teika had initially copied it. Tamai Kosuke's version of the *Sarashina Dairy* has been used as the only existing version of the diary so far.

5) It is notable that the diary does not mention that the author, Takasue no Musume, was a writer of tales, *monogatari*, herself, or that she was related to Sugawara no Michizane (845–903), a famous statesman, scholar and poet of Chinese verse—facts that would be relevant in the context of the protagonist's passion for poetry and tales.

of meaning, which I call “the discourse on romance.” The *Sarashina nikki* is the only representative of the genre where romantic involvement is absent from the protagonist’s story. As part of my Ph.D. dissertation, I have argued that there is an underlying discourse on romance in the opening part of the diary, created through poetic allusion and intertextuality. The discourse on romance expresses the attitude to romance in the diary, explaining the lack of romantic development.

The image of tears is prominent both in the beginning and the ending of the diary and functions as a connecting image between the two.⁶⁾ However, it is presented in contrasting ways. In the opening part, the image of tears is mainly suggested through poetic allusion, intertextuality and landscape descriptions. In the closing part, tears are a central image, featuring in three of the four poems, which conclude the diary. Like most passages in the diary, the beginning and ending create layers of meaning and can be interpreted in multiple and contrasting ways. Most critics see the sadness (tears) of the closing part as a natural ending of the narrative movement from youthful dreams and hopes to disillusionment and despair in old age. I will argue that, although the image of tears at the end of the diary is complex and evades a single interpretation, its recurrence at the end of the diary can also be seen as a conclusion to the discourse on romance. The “hidden” tears in the opening part are a prelude to a life story where the protagonist suffers bereavement and disappointment, and romance is only a vicarious experience through fiction. At the end of the story the heroine is “openly shedding tears” expressing an all-encompassing feeling of sadness, including sadness related to the absence and/or impossibility of romance.

The Image of Tears in the Opening Part of the *Sarashina nikki*

The opening part of the *Sarashina nikki* describes a trip from Kazusa in the eastern provinces to the capital along Azumaji, The Eastern Road, when

6) The image of tears appears in nine other poems in the *Sarashina nikki*. It is combined with the poetic words *sode*, (wet) ‘sleeves,’ *nami*, ‘waves,’ and *tsuyu* ‘dew,’ which are associated with the expression of a romantic sentiment.

the heroine is thirteen years old, and after her father completes his term as governor of Kazusa. Although the trip takes about three months, the travelogue accounts for one-fifth of the diary, marking its special status in the narrative. Also, it has a distinctly different style from the rest of the diary, prompting diverse and conflicting interpretations. On the surface, the travelogue reads like a joyful trip, depicted playfully through the eyes of a child, but poetic allusion and intertextual references give it a more complex meaning and suggest that it is an imaginative recreation of a childhood experience, shaped in a literary way (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 51).

The trip to the capital follows an itinerary of fifty-one toponyms, out of which twenty-two are known to have been already canonized as *utamakura*, i.e. poetic toponyms found in *waka* anthologies, in the *Makura no sōshi* (*The Pillow Book*, early 11th c) by Sei Shōnagon (966–1017 or 1025), which contains a list of *utamakura*, and in *utamakura* manuals⁷⁾ from the Heian period.

One of the most striking and widely disputed features of the travelogue is its geographical imprecision: very often the order of toponyms is “incorrect,” that is, it does not correspond to topographical succession, and in addition there are quite a few unidentified toponyms.

My presumption is that topography in the travelogue is not a representation of reality, but follows the logic of the *utamakura*, which are *uta kotoba*, “poetic words” loaded with poetic allusions and associations. In other words, what is “incorrect” on a mimetic or referential level becomes “correct” on a poetic level.

An important hint for such an approach to the travelogue is the striking scarcity of poems in it. There are only three poems, which is a significant deviation not only from the general pattern of the *Sarashina nikki* itself, which abounds in *waka*, but also from the norms of the travelogue genre, *kikōbun*, which is characterized by a large number of *waka* interwoven in the narrative. It could be argued that the absence of poems is redeemed by the *utamakura*, which function as signposts of clusters of associations and

7) *Utamakura* manuals include *Nōin utamakura* 能因歌枕, *Waka shogakushō* 和歌初学抄, *Godaishū utamakura* 五代集歌枕, *Kokinwaka rokujō* 古今和歌六帖.

poetic allusions along the Eastern Road, “replacing” the missing poems by simultaneously evoking multiple poems from the literary canon and creating broader and more complex meaning than a single poem.

To quote Tzvetana Kristeva (2001b, 271), “while in the *Manyōshū utamakura* are always associated with some historical or legendary event, the *utamakura* in the poetic tradition of Heian generated meaning according to the poetic associations which they evoked.” In other words, with the development of poetry, *utamakura* gradually change from concrete and real place names into mere poetic devices or *makura-kotoba*, functioning to produce a specific poetic effect or to express a particular feeling.

In fact, the allusions created by the poetic toponyms might have been explicit for readers of those times who were well versed in *waka* and for whom poetry was a major means of daily communication. In my study, I have used the CD-ROM version of the complete *waka* collection *Kokka taikan* for tracing the poems, to which the poetic toponyms refer.

The Poetic Image of Tears in the Travelogue

Although the image of tears is a universal expression of beauty and sadness in any literature around the world (Kristeva 2000, 22), it is notable that tears are a prominent image in Japanese classical literature “flowing endlessly in every work” (Kristeva 2011, 76). According to Watanabe Hideo, the frequency of images of flowing water in classical Japanese poetry, including tears, can be explained with Japan’s insular geography, which abounds in rapidly flowing rivers and waterfalls (as cited in Kristeva 2000, 15). Another scholar, Miyao Takashi, links the prevalent image of tears in Japanese literature with Japan’s climate and the high frequency of rainfall, saying that “tears are the ultimate subject matter in our literature” (as cited in Kristeva 2000, 8). Tears in classical Japanese poetry are likened to and associated with such natural phenomena as rain, (rain)drops and dew (as cited in Kristeva 2000, 14–15). In addition, Tzvetana Kristeva (2011, 76) explains that rather than actual tears, the image of tears in *waka* stands for “tears that flow from the heart.”

I will proceed to a discussion of the numerous *utamakura* and toponyms,

as well as landscape descriptions in the travelogue, which create poetic associations with *namida*, “tears,” and the way they express matters of the heart in the *Sarashina nikki*.

The Opening Sentence and the *Utamakura Azumaji*

The *Sarashina nikki*'s famous first sentence already creates poetic associations with romance and sadness (tears):

As a girl raised on the back of beyond, even farther than the end of the road to the East Country, how rustic and odd I must have been. But however it was that I first became enthralled with them, once I knew that such things as tales existed in the world, all I could think of over and over was how much I wanted to read them. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 90)

A common opinion among scholars is that “the road to the East Country,” refers to a poem by Ki no Tomonori from the *Kokin rokujō*, in which Hitachi is described as the place “at the end of the Eastern Road” *azumaji no michi no hate naru hitachi*:

あづま路のみちのはてなる常陸おびのかごとばかりもあひみてしかな
(*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)⁸⁾

For even the length of time
Given by the excuse of a sash of Hitachi,
that place even farther
than the end of the road to the East Country,
I long to meet and see you. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 51)

The first sentence sets the theme of the entire diary by evoking Takasue no Musume's longing for the world romance and her passion for the *Genji*

8) Poem 3360 in the *Kokinwaka rokujō*, a poetry collection attributed to Fujiwara no Kintō (966–1041), which was circulated widely in mid-Heian.

monogatari (*The Tale of Genji*, 1008), which shapes her life story and her worldview.⁹⁾ Fictional tales, *monogatari*,¹⁰⁾ stand for romance promised by the capital as a cultural and social space.

The first sentence also highlights the heroine's identification with the *Genji monogatari* character, Ukifune, through a biographical mistake—the protagonist was not raised in Hitachi, which is in Azuma, where she spent only three years. Most commentators agree that the poem is not a simple figure of speech (Inukai 1969, 80–92) and that its main function is to allude to Ukifune through a reference to Hitachi (Itō 1995, 223), where Ukifune was raised.

Ukifune is mentioned several times in the *Sarashina nikki* as a character that the protagonist wishes to emulate. The allusion to Ukifune creates associations with the sorrowful aspect of romance, and therefore with the image of tears. Ukifune,¹¹⁾ “drifting boat,” is a tragic character who suffers both from the uncertainty of love and from the ugly reality of marriage. Her evocation in the first sentence conjures the image of water, implied in her name, her sad story, and therefore the image of tears. The figure of Ukifune is alluded to numerous times in the travelogue through *utamakura* and toponyms, images of water, rivers and bridges.

In addition, in poetry the *utamakura* Azumaji itself is usually combined with the poetic words *kokoro*, “heart,” and *koishi*, “dear,” evoking romance, and poetic images related to tears and therefore to emotional pain, including *tsuyu*, “dew,” *kasumi*, “mist,” and *kiri*, “fog, mist.” For example:

あづまぢにありとききこしむさしのをけふしもきりのたちかくすらん

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- 9) The *Sarashina nikki* offers the first valuable and unique testimony of the reception of the *Genji monogatari* by the second generation of its readers.
- 10) *Monogatari* is a genre of fictional tales or “tale” literature in Heian, combining prose and poetry. Although very popular, it was disparaged as only being fit for the entertainment of women and children.
- 11) This name is Ukifune's simile for herself, used in a poem of reply to Niou, composed while they drift along Uji river, and Ukifune feels that she starts to fall in love with Niou.

(*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)¹²⁾

I heard that Musashino
is on the Eastern Road,
yet now it must be wrapped in mist.¹³⁾

あづまぢや一夜かほどにくる春をいかでさきだつ霞なるらん

(*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)¹⁴⁾

The Eastern Road!

Is the mist
that rose through the night
just a forerunner of Spring?

あづまぢのくさばをわけん人よりもおくるる袖ぞまづは露けき

(*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)¹⁵⁾

The sleeves
of the one left behind in the capital
become wet with dew-drops of tears
before the sleeves of the one
who is walking through the grass of the Eastern Road.

Azumaji's common poetic association with *tsuyu*, "dew," *kiri*, "fog, mist," and *kasumi*, "mist" provides narrative coherence with the following passage in the travelogue, which abounds in images of water. The first one is the toponym Ikada, literally meaning "raft," preceding a passage rich in water imagery.

12) Poem 479 from the *Yoshinobushū* 能宣集, a private poetry collection of Ōnakatomi no yoshinobu (921–991), a poet belonging to the group of *Sanjūrokkasen* 三十六歌仙, the Thirty-six Immortals of Poetry, group of Japanese poets of the Asuka, Nara, and Heian periods selected by Fujiwara no Kintō as exemplars of Japanese poetic ability.

13) All poetry translations are my own, unless otherwise specified.

14) Poem number one of the *Tadanorishū* 忠度集, a private poetry collection of the poet and warrior Taira no Tadanori (1144–1184).

15) Poem number 212 from the ten-volume poetry collection, *Shūishō* 拾遺抄, compiled before 999 by Fujiwara Kintō.

The Text Submerged in Water—Ikada

Ikada is a geographically unidentified toponym. It appears in a context where the image of water is foregrounded in the description of an evening mist, the view of the sea and a torrential rain, which almost sweeps away the temporary shelter where the protagonist's party is taking refuge. The toponym Ikada in its literal meaning of "raft" fits perfectly with the description of the scene containing a large number of references to water including *ame*, "rain," *kiri*, "mist," *umi*, "sea," and *uku*, "to float":

To the east and west, the sea was nearby, so fascinating. Since it was wonderfully charming, when the evening mists rose over the scene, I did not fall into even a shallow slumber I even found it sad that we were going to leave this place. On the fifteenth day of that same month as rain poured down out of a dark sky, we crossed the provincial border and stopped at a place in Shimōsa Province called Ikada. Indeed, the rain fell so hard it seemed as though our little hut might float away. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 90)

The images of water along with the verb *uku*, "to float," can be seen as another reference to Ukifune, whose name literally means "floating boat." *Uku* itself is a poetic word, which in the name of Ukifune stands for complex psychological, religious and moral issues. It suggests Ukifune's state of wandering, *sasurai*, and her homelessness. It also symbolizes the misery of her situation in the homophonous adjective *ushi*, "painful, unpleasant and cold," which implies the name of the place where most of Ukifune's drama unfolds, Uji, and its gloomy and despondent atmosphere. The image of Ikada as a "raft" floating on water creates a parallel with Ukifune's figure symbolized by the image of a "floating boat" borne to uncertainty and misery.

Ikada is often associated with the poetic word *nami*, "waves," traditionally related to *namida*, "tears." For example:

おほみ河くだすいかだのみなれをさしいづる物はなみだなりけり (*Shinpen*)

kokka taikan, 1996)¹⁶⁾

The raft pole
rowing on the familiar waters of Ōigawa
was rowing in a river of tears.

筏師やいかにも思ひよらぬにもうきてなぐるけさの涙を (*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)¹⁷⁾

Oh raftsmen,
why don't you notice
that the waters are this morning's
flowing river of tears.

In the context of the travelogue, the association of Ikada with *nami*, “waves” and *namida* “tears” conjures the tears shed by Ukifune and can be seen as a metaphor of sadness foreshadowing the grief and disappointment in the protagonist's life story.

Fuji, Kiyomigaseki, Tago no ura, Ōigawa: Burning Passion and Tears

Toward the end of the travelogue the protagonist's party comes across a splendid view of Mount Fuji. The flames and smoke emitted by Fuji, which until the eighteenth century was an active volcano, were used as a metaphor of love and passion as early as the *Manyōshū*.¹⁸⁾ During Heian, Fuji was an established metaphor of love, as can be seen in the preface to the *Kokinshū*, *Kanao*, written by Ki no Tsurayuki:

富士の煙によそへて人を恋ひ (*Kokinwakashū*, 1994)¹⁹⁾

16) Poem number 354 from the poetry collection *Izumishikubushū* 和泉式部集 by the famous mid-Heian female poet Izumi Shikibu (976–?).

17) The poem (number 37), appears in the *Yowanonezame* 夜半の寝覚, a *monogatari* whose authorship is attributed to Takasue no Musume.

18) *Manyōshū*, 万葉集, *Collection of Thousand Leaves*, completed around 759, is the oldest extant collection of Japanese *waka* poetry.

19) From the *Kanao* 仮名序, the Japanese preface to the tenth-century *waka* anthology *Kokinwakashū*. The *Kanao* was written by the poet and principal compiler of the

compare romantic passion to Mount Fuji's smoke (McCullough 1985, 5)

The image of Fuji emitting flames and smoke activates a chain of associations with the sound image of *omoi/omohi*, "thought, concern, affection," whose second syllable is homophonous with the word *hi*, "fire." The poetic association between *omoi* "thought, concern, love" and *hi*, "fire" is used as a poetic symbol of 'burning passion.' Here are two examples among the great number of *waka* featuring Fuji:

君といへば見まれ見ずまれ富士の嶺のめづらしげなく燃ゆる我が恋 (*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)²⁰⁾

As the deathless fire

Smolders inside Mount Fuji,

So burns my passion,

Unaltered by occasions

Of seeing and not seeing. (McCullough 1985, 151)

富士の嶺をよそにぞ聞さし今は我が思ひに燃ゆる煙なりけり (*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)²¹⁾

I used to think

the flames of Mount Fuji

had nothing to do with me,

but now I know

that they are burning just like my thoughts (*omoi, omohi: hi* — "fire")

The passage in the *Sarashina nikki* describing Fuji complies with its traditional poetic image by presenting it as "nothing else in the world. ...

Kokinwakashū, Ki no Tsurayuki (872–945).

20) Poem 680 of the *Kokinwakashū* 古今和歌集.

21) Poem 1014 from the poetry collection *Gosenwaka-shū* 後撰和歌集, often abbreviated as *Gosenshū*, is an imperial anthology of Japanese *waka* compiled in 951 at the behest of Emperor Murakami.

from the mountain's slightly flat top, smoke rises. At dusk, one can even see flames shooting up" (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 102).

The toponym following the description of Fuji in the travelogue is Kiyomigaseki, the barrier of Kiyomi, a famous *utamakura*, typically associated with *nami*, "waves" and therefore with *namida*, "tears." Interestingly, Kiyomigaseki is followed by a group of geographically misplaced toponyms. Instead of the correct geographical succession of Fuji, Fujigawa, Tago no ura, Kiyomigaseki, Numajiri, Ōigawa, the order in the text is Fuji, Kiyomigaseki, Tago no ura, Ōigawa, Fujigawa, Numajiri. The common explanation of the mixed-up toponyms is the blurred memory of the aged author. I would agree with Misumi Yōichi (1981) that placing Kiyomigaseki immediately after Fuji follows the logic of the poetic language and can be interpreted as an intentional allusion to the famous poem:

胸は富士袖は清見が関なれや煙も波も立たぬ日ぞなき (*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)²²⁾

My bosom is like Fuji,
my sleeves are like Kiyomigaseki,
there is not a single day
without flames (passionate love) and waves (tears).

In the above poem Fuji is a metaphor for "burning passion," while *Kiyomigaseki* stands for "tears" as a result of the established poetic association between *nami*, "waves" and *namida*, "tears." Tzvetana Kristeva (2001b, 141) interprets the poem as an expression of the "depth of the human heart," with smoke floating in the skies and the waves' ebb and flow, creating a vertical and a horizontal dimension symbolizing the ability to see clearly into the heart, *kiyoraka ni mieru*, suggested by the sound image of Kiyomigaseki.

I would argue that the order of toponyms following *Kiyomigaseki* is

22) Poem sixty-one from the third volume of the private poetry collection *Fukayabushū* 深養父集 of the mid-Heian poet Kiyowara no Fukayabu 清原の深養父.

designed to create a sustained image of *nami*, “waves” and *namida*, “tears,” since the two toponyms which follow Kiyomigaseki, Tagonoura, and Ōigawa, are both associated with *nami*, “waves” in the poetic language. Here is the passage describing the latter two *utamakura* in the diary:

At Tago Bay, the waves were high, and we rowed around in a boat.
At the river called Ōi, there is a ford. The water of that river is unusual;
it is as though a lot of rice flour has been dissolved in it, and the white
water flows very rapidly. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 102)

Tagonoura, Tago Bay, is a famous *utamakura* dating back to the *Manyōshū*. With very rare exceptions, Tagonoura appears together with *nami*, “waves” and Mount Fuji. Whereas in the *Manyōshū*, Tagonoura is presented as a place from which Fuji is barely visible, during Heian, *Tagonoura* was considered a famous spot for contemplating Mount Fuji in its full splendor (Kubota Jun and Baba Akiko 1999, 508). This modified perspective of Tagonoura was a result of the development of its poetic image. During Heian Tagonoura evolved into an *utamakura* symbolizing romance through its fixed association with Fuji and *nami*, “waves.” Therefore, the stronger poetic association between Tagonoura and Fuji resulted in an evolution of the image of Tagonoura as a location from which Fuji can be seen well. Here are some examples to illustrate Tagonoura’s poetic meaning:

駿河なる田子の浦波たたぬ日はあれども君を恋ひぬ日はなし (*Kokinwakashū*
1994, 489)

Although there are days
when waves fail to rise
near Suruga’s shore
at Tago, there are no days
when I do not yearn for you. (McCullough 1985, 114)

わがこひをしらんと思はば田子の浦に立つらん浪のかずをかぞへよ
(*Gosenwakashū* 1990, 630)

If you want to know

how much I love you,
 try to count
 the waves at Tago Bay.

Ōigawa, a toponym following Tagonoura, is also associated with *nami*, “waves,” as well as with *shiro*, “white,” and *shiranami*, “white waves”:

紅葉ぱのちりてながる大井河せぜのしらなみかけとどめなん (*Shinpen kokka taikan*, 1996)²³⁾

The red maple leaves
 scattering and drifting down Ōigawa
 are so many
 that it looks as if
 they might stop the white waves of its rapids.

In the travelogue, Ōigawa’s waters are compared to a “thick white stream of powdered rice,” evoking *shiro*, “white” and therefore *shiranami*, “white waves.” Tzvetana Kristeva (2000, 141) explains that the sound association of *shiranami*, “white waves” with tears on the one hand, and with *shiranu*, “unknown” and *shiranumi*, “unknown self,” on the other, produces the image of *shiranunamida*, literally “unknown tears” or tears shed in secret. In addition, the close relationship between *namida*, “tears” and Ōigawa gives rise to an association with the poetic word *namidagawa*, “a river of tears,” completing the imagery of waves and tears created by Kiyomigaseki and Tagonoura.

Namidagawa is a common poetic word in Heian, used most often in love poems as a hyperbole of sadness, typically caused by amorous heartache. For example:

23) Poem number seventeen from the private collection *Korenorishū* 是則集 by the early Heian poet Sakanoue no Korenori 坂上是則, one of the Thirty-six Immortals of Poetry.

涙河身投ぐばかりの淵はあれど氷とけねばゆく方もなし (*Gosenwakashū*

1990, 494)

Although the river of tears

is so deep

that I could throw myself in it,

it is frozen

and cannot break its way to your heart.

涙川なに水上を尋ねけむ物思ふ時のわが身なりけり (*Kokinwakashū* 1994, 511)

Why did I ask where

I might find the headwaters

Of the River of Tears?

They are here in my own self

When gloomy thoughts fill my mind. (McCullough 1985, 118)

Along with Fuji, Kiyomigaseki, Tago no ura and Ōigawa, the image of *namidagawa* completes the poetic imagery of tragic romance. Fuji, a symbol of burning passion, is followed by Kiyomigaseki and Tago no ura, both associated with Fuji and symbolizing tears. Ōigawa follows Kiyomigaseki and Tago no ura, evoking a “river of tears,” *namidagawa*, and adding the nuance of *shiranu namida* or “tears shed in secret.” The poetic associations in the succession of Fuji, Kiyomigaseki, Tago no ura and Ōigawa can be seen as an extended metaphor for tears shed in secret, suggesting another reference to Ukifune and her lonely suffering caused by amorous entanglement.

The Ending of the Travelogue: Ōsaka no seki, Nakoso no seki, and Saya no nakayama

Another three important toponyms related to the discourse on romance are Ōsaka no seki, Nakoso no seki and Saya no nakayama. They appear toward the end of the travelogue and in the poetic language very frequently feature together with Azumaji.

The opening sentence of the travelogue and its allusion to a famous love poem containing the *utamakura* Azumaji provides a prelude to the discourse

on romance. The romantic associations of the *utamakura* Azumaji itself and its close association in the poetic language with the *utamakura* Ōsaka no seki, Nakoso no seki and Saya no nakayama create a framework for the discourse on romance. Ōsaka no seki²⁴⁾ is a famous *utamakura* symbolizing a romantic meeting. It highlights the desire expressed in the first sentence of the diary to go to the capital and get hold of all the tales, more specifically the *Genji monogatari*. However, the *utamakura* Saya (Sayo) no nakayama, appearing later in the travelogue, has the poetic meaning of “unable to meet” and Nakoso no seki, whose poetic meaning is contained in the word *nakoso*, “don’t come,” add a nuance of negativity and hesitation to the longing for romance. This hesitation can be explained by the evocation of the *Genji monogatari* heroine Ukifune in the very first sentence and throughout the travelogue. Ukifune’s tragic story is an example of the dangers of romance in the capital, where personal misfortune combined with low social standing, political intrigue and the cruel reality of marriage make her a victim. The narrative function of Ukifune’s figure and her unhappy story appear as a warning for the protagonist, whose social background is similar to Ukifune’s, not to get emotionally involved in order to avoid pain and suffering.

In the closing part of the travelogue there are twenty-one *utamakura* and toponyms following the poetic word *nanomi*. Its meaning, “in name only,” is illustrated by the hectic enumeration of *utamakura* and toponyms. The enumeration culminates with Ōsaka no seki, which despite being defined as one of the most beautiful spots on the way, is not described. The missing description of such a famous *utamakura*, suggests that Ōsaka no seki and the idea of a romantic meeting which it symbolizes, is “in name only.” The absence of a description of Ōsaka no seki, forebodes the absence of romance in the story following the travelogue.

24) Ōsaka no seki, one of the most famous checkpoints separating the capital from the eastern provinces, symbolizes the nostalgia of leaving the capital behind and the sadness of parting in general. Written with the character 逢ふ, *au*, “to meet,” its meaning in Heian signified romantic love and its hardships, since the verb *au* ‘to meet’ also has the meaning of exchanging vows.

Similar to all recurrent images in the diary, the image of tears defies a single and straightforward interpretation. However, it can be argued that the poetic associations of the image of tears in the travelogue with the character of Ukifune and with romance in general, defines the attitude to romance in the diary, as part of the discourse on romance. As mentioned above, romance does not take place in the *Sarashina nikki*,²⁵⁾ and the image of tears creates a sense of ambiguity, typical for the diary in general. Do tears stand for the sadness from the absence of romance, or from a secret love story? Was the heroine sad because she never turned into her admired Ukifune, or because she realized that the type of romance described in tales can only bring heartache, disappointment and even death? We will never know, and finding an answer is not essential. The complex image of tears in the travelogue is a characteristic stylistic feature of the *Sarashina nikki*, making it a unique combination of ambiguities and contradictions arranged in a multi-layered, open-ended and symbolistic work of art.

The Ending of the *Sarashina nikki*

The image of tears takes center stage in four poems at the end of the diary, creating a multifaceted feeling of sadness, which evades a straightforward interpretation. The first poem deplores the heroine's old age and solitude, depicting a desolate old woman, looking back on her past with regret:

今は世にあらじものと思ふらむあはれ泣く泣くなほこそはふれ (Sugawara Takasue no Musume 1994, 359)

Is it that you think

I am one no longer living

25) There are two romantic episodes in the diary, both of them ending without development. The first one is the so-called Higashiyama episode, where the heroine exchanges poems with an unidentified companion by a well. Some commentators consider that the intimate tone of the exchange suggests that the companion might have been a lover, but there is no conclusive interpretation due to the vague nature of the narrative. The second episode is an encounter with a courtier, Minamoto Sukemichi, on two occasions, during the brief career of the protagonist as a court attendant.

In this world of ours?
 Sadly I cry and cry,
 yet I do indeed live on. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 207–8)

The second poem contains the image of the moon, a common metaphor for the light of Buddha. However, the expression “heart clouded by tears that fall” refers to sorrow caused by the real world and therefore to the real moon, thus suggesting that the heroine has not renounced the world, and that the poem’s meaning is not religious.

ひまもなき涙にくもるところにもあかしと見ゆる付きの影かな (Sugawara Takasue no Musume 1994, 359)
 Even to a heart
 clouded by tears that fall
 with no respite,
 the light pouring from the moon
 can appear so radiant. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 208)

The last two poems depict another lonely and dismal scene of an abandoned garden overgrown with mugwort. Overgrown mugwort is a poetic image usually associated with Suetsumuhana, a heroine from the *Genji monogatari*, and the main character from the chapter *Yomogui* (“The Mugwort Patch”). Suetsumuhana is a bizarre character, who draws Genji’s attention with her quirkiness. She is neither attractive, nor talented, and lives in a dilapidated house surrounded by an overgrown garden. However, Genji takes care of her and she secures a comfortable position as a marginal personality in his world. The reference to Suetsumuhana can be interpreted as the diary heroine’s self-identification with the unflattering looks and standing of Suetsumuhana, inspired by self-pity and self-deprecation. The heroine aspired to be like Ukifune, but ended up as a Suetsumuhana, or possibly she has always been a Suetsumuhana, at least in her own eyes.

The image of dew in the following poem could be seen as a symbol of the fleeting nature of human life often referred to in poetry as *tsuyu no*

inochi, “life as evanescent as dew.” Dew is also a common poetic word evoking tears, complementing the image of the “lonely crying voice” at the end of the poem:

しげりゆくよもぎが露にそぼちつつ人にとはれぬ音をのみぞ泣く (Sugawara Takasue no Musume 1994, 360)
Mugwort growing even thicker
ever thicker, sodden
with dew;
a voice sought by no one
cries out all alone. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 208)

The last poem creates a counterpoint to the previous three by mentioning a “final renouncement” and introducing the idea of religious renunciation. The poem is said to be exchanged with a nun, reinforcing its religious implication:

世のつねの宿のよもぎを思ひやれそむきはてたる庭の草むら (Sugawara Takasue no Musume 1994, 360)
In the mugwort of a
Dwelling in the everyday world,
please imagine
the dense grasses in the garden
of final renouncement. (Arntzen and Itō 2014, 208)

The diary’s ending creates a contradiction between spiritual renunciation and attachment to the world and to fiction, between a sense of peace and extreme sadness and despair. This ambiguity and open-endedness constitute *Sarashina nikki*’s unique lyrical quality, which allows for multiple and diverse interpretations, and makes the retrospective account of a woman’s life a rich and universal personal story appealing to readers of all times.

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Abstract

This paper is inspired by Prof. Tzvetana Kristeva's monumental study on the poetic image of tears, *Namida no shigaku: Ōchō bungaku ni okeru shiteki gengo* (*The Poetics of Tears: Poetic Language in the Literature of the Heian Court*), and is based on my Ph.D. research done under her supervision.

The paper discusses the poetic image of tears in the *Sarashina nikki* (*Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1058), written by Takasue no Musume, Takasue's daughter.

The image of tears is a recurrent motif throughout the *Sarashina Diary*, but it is especially prominent in its opening and closing parts, which present it in contrasting ways.

In the opening part, a travelogue from the Eastern provinces to the capital, the image of tears is not explicit and is suggested through the use of toponyms, *utamakura* and landscape descriptions. I traced the poetic allusions and associations with tears created by the toponyms and *utamakura* in the travelogue, using the CD-ROM version of the complete waka collection *Kokka Taikan*. I came to the conclusion that although the image of tears can be ambiguous and have multiple interpretations, one of its main functions is to evoke the character of Ukifune, the tragic heroine from the *Tale of Genji*, and to prepare the reader for a story with no romantic development—an unusual deviation from the genre of *nikki bungaku*, to which the *Sarashina Diary* belongs.

Tears are a focusing image in the final poems of the diary as well, providing a connection with its beginning. The “hidden” tears in the opening part are a prelude to a life story where the protagonist suffers bereavement and disappointment, and romance is only a vicarious experience through fiction. At the end of the story the heroine is “openly shedding tears” expressing an all-encompassing feeling of sadness, including sadness related to the absence and/or impossibility of romance.